



City of Somerville
PLANNING BOARD
City Hall 3rd Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

29 APRIL 2021 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on GoToWebinar.

NAME	TITLE	STATUS	ARRIVED
Michael Capuano	Chair	<i>Present</i>	
Amelia Aboff	Vice Chair	<i>Present</i>	
Jahan Habib	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Rob Buchanan	Alternate	<i>Present</i>	

City staff present: Charlotte Leis (Planning & Zoning), Rebecca Lyn Cooper (Planning & Zoning), Daniel Bartman (Planning & Zoning), and Sarah Lewis (Planning & Zoning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:01pm and went into recess due to a Joint Session with the Land Use Committee. The Planning Board returned from recess at 7:48pm and adjourned at 9:20pm.

PUBLIC HEARING: 379 Somerville Avenue

The applicant requested a continuance to the next regularly scheduled Planning Board meeting.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to continue the project to the May 20, 2021 meeting.

RESULT:	CONTINUED
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PUBLIC HEARING: 3 Hawkins Street

(continued from 15 April 2021)

Architect Peter Quinn presented updated plans and elevations and discussed design responses to the comments and concerns raised by Board members including updates to landscaping, park access, building differentiation, and color palette.

The applicant team added additional trees, landscaping beds, and delineated the front and rear of the structure by differing materials, balconies and paint color. They clarified the park connection and access by creating a walkway with pavers, gravel, and landscaping. Pedestrians will be able to connect through the site to Olive Square.

The team updated the recessed entry and flat elevations by providing four feet deep balconies to the studio apartments above and pulling the front of the building out to be flush with the façade for a better, covered entrance to the park. The applicant addressed the requirement for differentiation between the front and rear of the building through the addition of projected five foot balconies on the Lake Street side and a change in the color palette.

Chair Capuano opened the public testimony regarding the changes presented.

Tori Antonino (65 Boston Street) made suggestions about native vegetation on the site.

Chair Capuano closed the public testimony.

The Board and the applicant discussed the proposed change in color palette and building materials.

Staff provided revised condition language regarding Transportation Mitigation and Sidewalks.

Vice Chair Aboff called for a condition that the applicant team work with Staff to ensure that the final design is harmonious and an additional condition that the applicant team work with applicable City Departments to ensure that no invasive species are selected for the project.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve, with conditions, the application for Site Plan Approval.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve, with conditions, the Special Permit to establish a Household Living use.

RESULT:

APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS

PUBLIC HEARING: 120-132 Middlesex Avenue

(continued from 15 April 2021)

Joe Hanley confirmed that the development covenant had been signed by all parties and provided an introduction to the project team and an overview of the progress made since the last meeting.

Ed Doherty discussed the current tenants on the site. The current owner, Design Consultants Inc. is looking to relocate in Somerville. Templo Dos Milagres was impacted financially by COVID-19 pandemic and closed over a year ago. Arbella Insurance will not renew its lease after June. Christian Assembly of God views the sale as an opportunity to build a larger church on a different site and expand their presence online.

Vice Chair Aboff raised the question if the below grade parking could be designed as such that it might be able to be repurposed into usable space, if it were to be no longer needed as parking in the future. BK Boley indicated that it was a condition they had observed in other projects and would be happy to explore it.

The applicant team presented the newly designed ground floor activation/community space.

Shawna Gilles-Smith presented updates for the public realm, including the cycle track and landscaping. The applicant proposed to raise-up the bike lane to the level of the pedestrian sidewalk, which included separating this space from the roadway by hedges.

Joe Hanley presented the community benefits as listed in the covenant; a total of roughly \$15 million in contributions.

Chair Capuano opened public testimony regarding the changes presented.

No one indicated that they wished to speak.

Chair Capuano closed public testimony.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve, with conditions, the Master Plan Special Permit.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve, with conditions, the Special Permit for a waiver from the maximum building height set by Table 7.4.6 of the SZO, to allow a building of 18 stories, and up to 257 feet.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve, with conditions, the Special Permit for a waiver from the maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) set by Table 7.4.6 of the SZO, to allow a building exceeding 10.0 FAR.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve, with conditions, the Special Permit to authorize occupancy of commercial spaces over 10,000 square feet by any permitted use.

RESULT:

APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS

PUBLIC HEARING: 240 Elm Street

(continued from 15 April 2021)

The team noted that they did not prepare a presentation but that they would be pleased to answer any questions the Board might have. Chair Capuano noted that they had a robust discussion at the prior meeting.

The Board discussed the written testimony they had received since the last meeting.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve, with conditions, the Special Permit to establish a Cannabis Retail Sales use.

RESULT:

APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS

PUBLIC HEARING: 255 Elm Street

The Board and the applicant discussed concerns about visibility into the interior of the shop. The applicant noted that art in the space would change quarterly in coordination with arts community. They also spoke about the floor plan and layout of the proposed tenant space, noting that there appears to be a lobby area that may restrict visibility onto the sales floor from the public right-of-way and that art would not be needed to screen the sales floor.

The Board and Staff discussed the State regulations regarding visibility into cannabis shops.

Chair Capuano asked for an additional condition that the applicant team explore a redesign as part of Minor Site Plan Approval for the storefront to enable the waiting area to be open and visible from the street.

Following a motion by Chair Capuano, seconded by Vice Chair Aboff, the Board voted unanimously (4-0) to approve, with conditions, the Special Permit to establish a Cannabis Retail Sales use.

RESULT:

APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS

NOTICE: These minutes constitute a summary of the votes and key discussions at this meeting. To review a full recording, please contact the Planning & Zoning Division at planning@somervillema.gov.